

A TRUE CHURCH AND A GOOD CHURCHMAN.

A SERMON

PREACHED IN

ST. PHILIP'S CHURCH, NEAR CHELTENHAM,

ON SUNDAY, MARCH 16th, 1845.

WITH NOTES AND ADDITIONS.

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"SERMONS," "FIRST SUNDAYS AT CHURCH,"
"A LATIN-ENGLISH DICTIONARY,"
&c. &c.

LONDON:
J. HATCHARD AND SON, 187, PICCADILLY.
1845.

Price One Shilling.

LONDON:

G. J. PALMER, PRINTER, SAVOY STREET, STRAND.

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LUKE vii. 9.

“He loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.” *

THIS plea was urged, on behalf of a Roman centurion, by some Jewish presbyters whom he had sent to our Lord, “beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant.” “He loveth our nation,” said they, “and this is the man who, at his own expense, or by his own efforts, has built our synagogue.”

I shall take occasion, from these words, to point out to you the relation which subsists between the Christian Church and the Jewish Synagogue,—the love which we may well bear to our own Church of England,—and the duty of exercising and displaying that love by contributing to the erection of her places of worship in destitute and populous districts.

* Literally, “it is he who hath built us the synagogue.”

I. The Christian church was formed upon the model of the Jewish Synagogue.

It was an erroneous idea which gained ground in the third century, that the Church was originally constructed, and was designed to subsist, after the pattern of the Jewish Temple.* And it agreed with that system of false teaching which long prevailed, to maintain the necessity of having altars, priests, and sacrifices within the walls of every Christian church, corresponding to the characteristics of that temple-service which was set forth as the proper and lawful model. But all this was contrary to truth. The fact remains, that the Christian church was constructed by the Apostles, or at least under their inspection, and with their approbation and consent, upon the model, not of the temple, but of the synagogue. Here was the pattern after which the Christian master-builders framed,—here the very platform upon which they erected,—at once the worship, the government, and the discipline of the churches of their day ; in all these respects acting continually upon their own divinely-inspired and unchangeable maxims of church polity,—“ Let all

* This opinion has been adopted by some modern divines, but it is altogether untenable. Presbyters made themselves priests ; priests were nothing without a sacrifice to offer ; a sacrifice implied an altar ; and with the idea of an altar that of a temple was closely allied. Hence this erroneous view of the nature of a Christian church.

things be done unto edifying ;”—“ Let all things be done decently and in order ;”—“ Let all your things be done with charity.” *

The temple, with its services, was ceremonial, typical, and peculiar to the Mosaic dispensation. “ The law,” we are expressly told, “ had a shadow of good things to come.” The temple itself was “ a figure for the time then present ;” and the things which pertained to it were “ figures of the true.” But the substance was of Christ. And the temple has now taken its place among those beggarly elements of a more imperfect state of things, which exhibited, indeed, the wisdom and goodness of God in their institution and their temporary use, but exhibited no less, or rather much more, the same wisdom and the same goodness in their removal and their overthrow. “ Destroy this temple,” said the blessed Jesus, “ and in three days I will raise it up.” † And the saying was fulfilled. That temple was destroyed at the death of Christ. He in whom the Godhead dwelt bodily, —he whose humanity was the temple, because the shekinah was there,—gave up that human body and that human soul to death,—and then, having rent in twain the veil of the typical temple, he raised up his humanity from the depth of its abasement, filled it more visibly than ever with his glorious Godhead, consecrated it to his own everlasting honour, as a temple no more to be destroyed,

* 1 Cor. xiv. 26, 40 ; xvi. 14.

† John ii. 19.

and then took it from earth to heaven. The glorified humanity of the risen and ascended Redeemer is now the real and visible temple of God,—a visible temple, hereafter to be greatly enlarged when all those members of Christ's mystical body, who are even now a spiritual temple, holy to the Lord, shall be gathered together, and the Lamb shall be in the midst of them, and his glory shall be theirs. “I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.” (Rev. xxi. 22.) In the mean time, until the resurrection of the just, the only temple of the living God is the sacred body and soul of the Lord Jesus Christ himself;—and the idea of any temple upon earth, save a spiritual temple,—any altar, whether of wood or stone,—any mediating or sacrificing priest, taken from among men,—or any material sacrifice whatever,—is no less than a fearful mockery of the unparalleled glory of the incarnate Son of God,—a contradiction of Gospel truth,—a manifestation, at the very best, of human ignorance,—and, in many points of view, a deliberate and malicious invention and instrument of Satan, the father of lies, and the enemy of Christ.

The temple, as we all know, was not an ordinary place of worship for the whole body of the Jewish people. It was a single edifice, situate in Jerusalem, to which the male portion of the population resorted from all parts of the country, only three times in a year, and for the performance of

special and peculiar ceremonies. But the synagogues, on the other hand, were those ordinary places of worship, in which both men and women, old and young, were accustomed to assemble, at least every sabbath day.*

It was the custom of our blessed Saviour to attend the synagogue every sabbath; and here he frequently taught the people, and preached the Gospel of the kingdom.† When the apostles went forth, divinely commissioned to lay the foundations

* Some suppose that the Jews did not begin to erect these places of worship until after the return from Babylon; but others confidently assign to them an earlier date. If that psalm, in which it is said, "They have burnt up all the houses of God," or, as it is in our Bible version, "all the synagogues of God in the land," be of as late a date as the captivity itself, it still points to the existence of those sacred buildings under the previous order of things;—but if the psalm was composed, as some think, even as early as David's time, then it points to their existence at a still more remote period of the Jewish history. Perhaps, too, we find yet more ancient traces of the existence of those places of worship in the eighty-third Psalm, where we read, "Make their nobles like Oreb and like Zeeb, yea, all their princes as Zeba and as Zalmunna, who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession." But be this as it may, it is certain that, according to Divine appointment, every returning sabbath was a day of holy convocation in every part of Judea, and that it was the custom of the people to resort to the prophets for instruction on the new moons and sabbaths; whence it appears probable, that places were gradually provided for these assemblies.

† Our Lord and the Apostles also taught in the temple; but teaching was not an essential and peculiar portion of temple service.

of the church, they also preached in the synagogues, as long as they were permitted to do so, wherever they came. If any of these synagogues, as a whole, embraced the Gospel, there can be no doubt that such synagogue, in its corporate capacity, and with all its existing institutions, became at once a Christian church; and it is abundantly plain that when bodies of believers were collected, whether from among Jews or Gentiles, these societies were formed, their government arranged, and their worship conducted,—with the exception, as we shall see, of necessary changes and additions,—according to the well-known plans and practice of the synagogue.*

This conformity of the early church to the Jewish synagogue becomes apparent, upon careful examination, in almost every particular.

What was *the service of the synagogue*? It consisted in the reading and expounding of God's word, public prayer, and psalmody. At first, the reading and expounding was confined to the books

* A Christian church is expressly called, by the Apostle St. James, a synagogue; "If there come unto your assembly,' (literally, unto your synagogue,) a man with a gold ring,' (ch. ii. v. 2.) And when the writer to the Hebrews exhorts the disciples not to forsake the assembling of themselves together, the word which he employs appears to bear reference to the same institution, and the whole expression is understood by some expositors as equivalent to "Do not neglect the practice of resorting to the synagogue."

of Moses ; but afterwards, and before the time of our Lord and his Apostles, it was extended to the Prophets. Thus Moses and the Prophets were read, explained, and made the topics of exhortation,—in one word, preached—in every synagogue. Public prayer appears to have been offered up after a set or prescribed form ; and praise was sung, most probably, from the book of Psalms. Such was the service of the synagogue ; and what was the service of the first Christian churches ? Substantially the same. Moses and the Prophets were still read, only they were expounded aright with reference to the Messiah ; and Jesus, moreover, was preached, by a declaration of his person, work, and offices ; in the first instance, by men directly inspired, or furnished with appropriate supernatural gifts, and afterwards, by the reading and expounding of those written records which Apostles and Evangelists left as an addition and final supplement to the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms. Prayers and supplications also, with thanksgivings, were offered up for the worshippers themselves, for their brethren in the faith, and for all men. Whether or not the prayers of the primitive church were offered in a set form, it is hard to prove ; but this was, doubtless, one of those matters concerning which every Christian synagogue was left in the full possession of Christian liberty. Oh that all prayers of the churches in the present day, whether extemporaneous or pre-composed, were made with that sim-

plicity, faith, and fervour, which were found, as we have every reason to suppose, in the assemblies of the first believers!—Thus far the service of the early churches was the same as the service of the synagogue, with the addition of Gospel light upon the pages of the Old Testament, and the direct and especial preaching of Jesus Christ, together with the use of his blessed name, and faith in his intercession, in the offering of prayer and praise. But, were there no other changes or additions? Certainly there were; at least, and most especially, there was one. But whence, let us ask, and of what character? Was anything, under apostolic sanction, imported from the temple-service? Was anything, ritual or ceremonial, borrowed from that symbolical worship, and engrafted on the more simple and spiritual service of the synagogue? Nothing of the kind. Everything of this nature appears to have been studiously avoided. The sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper were the only outward signs or ceremonies which were formally appointed for the observance of Christian congregations; and it is a remarkable fact, that neither the one nor the other had anything to do with the temple-service. Baptism took the place of circumcision, and circumcision was a rite which had been performed, not in the temple, but either in the private house, or else, according to a practice which seems to have prevailed, in the synagogue. The Lord's Supper succeeded to the

feast upon the passover ; and where had the passover formerly been eaten ? Again, not in the temple, but in the private house. The lamb, indeed, was slain at the altar of the temple, but afterwards eaten at home ; and, as if to avoid all occasion of mistake, it was not the flesh of the lamb which our Saviour chose as the symbol of his body, nor the blood of this victim which he appointed as the memorial of his own precious blood-shedding ; but it was the bread and the wine of the domestic board, which had not even been within the precincts of the temple.

Such was the whole religious service of the first Christian synagogues ;—the reading and preaching of God's word, specially of the new Covenant, as completing and explaining the old ;—the offering up of prayer and praise in the name of Christ ;—Baptism in the place of circumcision, at home or in the synagogue ;—the Lord's Supper instead of the paschal feast at home ;—but not a part or particle of the service of the Temple !

Still, however, as the synagogue worship maintained *a reference* to the earthly temple, so does our Christian service continually refer to Him of whom the temple was a type. The prayers of the synagogue were offered up while the incense was ascending from the altar, and at the time of the daily sacrifice ; and let us not forget that no prayer can ascend up acceptably from the Christian synagogue or from a Christian's heart, unless we have

regard, by faith, to the Redeemer's intercession, founded on the work of his atonement. The child that was circumcised at home or in the synagogue was afterwards presented in the temple; and the child that is baptized in the Christian church must be presented, not once, but continually, by faithful prayer, and by a godly education, to the almighty and merciful Redeemer. The paschal feast was made upon the lamb that had been slain at the altar of the temple, and our Christian pass-over must be celebrated, not only with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, and the humility of a broken and contrite heart, but with a direct and faithful remembrance of the Saviour's death, and the act of an individual, personal, trust in the blood of that sacrifice, once offered, for pardon, acceptance, sanctification, and eternal life.

Again, *the times and seasons of the synagogue worship* are worthy of remark. The full service, including the reading and expounding of the word of God, took place on the sabbath. And on two other days in the week there was that part of the service which consisted of public prayer. Here also observe the conformity of early churches to the existing pattern. I do not know that we have any account of the two services of prayer on the week-days; and yet it is not impossible that this institution of the synagogue may have been the remote origin of our Wednesday and Friday services. But it is beyond all doubt that the sabbath was the day of especial

worship in the primitive church ;—and so closely were the customs of the synagogue observed, that for several ages the Jewish or seventh-day sabbath was observed, according to the original practice of the synagogue, as well as the first-day sabbath, or the Lord's day, in commemoration of our Saviour's resurrection.

Let us proceed now to ask who were *the officers or ministers of the ancient synagogue*, and what was its *government and discipline*?—Each synagogue was governed, and its services conducted, by a certain number of presbyters or elders,* who were assisted in some matters by subordinate officers. These presbyters gave attention not only to government and discipline, but also to teaching, that is to say, the public expounding and preaching of the word of God. One of the presbyters was *president*, or *chief ruler of the synagogue*, taking the oversight of all matters, whether of doctrine or of discipline ; while all acted together, as a council, in matters of importance, and when all were present. The discipline which was exercised had reference to the moral conduct of the people ; the severest punishment consisting in expulsion from the synagogue.—And herein we dis-

* Usually three. It does not appear that, according to the constitution of the synagogue, some of these presbyters attended to discipline, and others to preaching, exclusively. But still it is likely that while all were teachers by virtue of their office, some did actually expound and preach more constantly, and more efficiently, than others.

cover, beyond all doubt, the platform of government and discipline in the Christian churches, as those churches were constituted under the observation, and with the sanction, of the Apostles. The early churches had their *presbyters* or elders, some or all of whom acted as rulers, or ministers of discipline,* while others “laboured,” moreover, “in the word and doctrine.” In each body of presbyters there was, probably from the very first, a *president*, to whom the title of *Episcopus*, or bishop,—originally, perhaps, common to all presbyters,—was very soon restricted ;—while any one possessing extraordinary authority, (as the apostles,) or having supernatural gifts, was permitted to exercise that authority or those gifts, according to the nature of the case. And, moreover, a special order of subordinate officers was speedily appointed,—perhaps not in all churches, but certainly in some of the largest and most considerable,—as overseers of the poor, or rather almoners of the congregation, under the name of *deacons*. And thus we discover the origin of that threefold order of the ministry which has continued, in the largest portions of the church, even to this day. Changes indeed have taken place ; but they are only such as every church has full authority to make. Our deacons are obviously different from those of the first institution. And our bishops, instead of being presidents of single congregations, are called to rule over many. It is

* Expulsion from the synagogue was continued under the name of excommunication.

probable that a very early date may be assigned to this more extended presidency; arising, as it naturally did, out of the superior numbers and importance of some congregations and presbyteries, in comparison with others. At all events, we cannot help thinking that this diocesan episcopacy is perfectly lawful. We contend that, *inasmuch as no form or constitution of church government, discipline, or worship, was authoritatively and exclusively established by our Lord or his Apostles,** we are at liberty to adopt or to retain any form which may consist with edification, order, and charity. We grant that a presbyterian church is lawful, and that an independent church is lawful, but yet we may say, with the apostle, “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.”† And if, to our conviction of the expediency of our episcopal form of government for edification, order, and charity, and our persuasion of the liberty which relates to these matters, we add also a remembrance of the fact, that, when the apostles adopted the model of the synagogue for the Christian church, they were virtually, in their own persons, presidents over large districts,‡—and that, on some occasions,

* I content myself, for the present, with a simple statement of this FACT. It would be easy to add a list of opinions, from our most learned bishops and divines, to the same effect.

† 1 Cor. x. 23.

‡ Besides this, we ought to consider what had been the pre-

they even appointed others, in their absence, as Timothy at Ephesus, and Titus in Crete, with power to ordain elders in every city,—surely we ought not to be blamed if we regard our diocesan episcopacy as established, not only by divine permission, but also, to a certain extent, in conformity with apostolic practice.

How were the Presbyters of the ancient synagogue appointed to their office?—Every presbyter was regularly set apart, and ordained, by other presbyters, with the imposition of their hands. And here again is a custom which passed over to the church. Christian presbyters, as we all know, were ordained to their office by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery ; and this practice has continued unaltered to the present day, and in the observances of our own church, except so far as relates to a limitation in favour of the authority of the presiding presbyter, or bishop. With us, presbyters cannot ordain presbyters without the bishop ; but neither does the bishop ordain without the presbyters.* The hands of presbyters, as well as

vious relation of the synagogue to the Sanhedrim and the chief priests. It may be interesting and useful to examine the influence which the chief priests exercised over the synagogue, how far that influence was legitimate, whether or not it was attended with any usurpations, and how far it contributed to the corruption of doctrine by traditional teaching.

* In our church the bishop alone ordains deacons ; but he is not alone in the ordination of presbyters. “ Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest in the church of God,

the hand of the bishop, are concerned in this ordination; in perfect accordance with the synagogue practice, and in harmony with the first principles of sound ecclesiastical polity.

In the ancient synagogue, those persons and those only, were thus ordained presbyters who had been previously *elected to that office by the whole congregation*. And this practice of election continued for many years in the Christian synagogue or church. Presbyters and bishops, in the first ages, were, beyond all doubt, elected by the people; the election of bishops remaining with the church for some time after the election of presbyter had ceased. Herein we have certainly departed from the model which received direct apostolical sanction. But not without good reason. We have at once right and necessity on our side; *right*, in that power which Christ and his Apostles

now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands ;” i. e. the hands of bishops and presbyters, according to the rubric, “ *The bishop, with the priests present, shall lay their hands severally on every one that receiveth the order of priesthood.*” Of course the bishop is still president, and it is he who speaks in the name of all.—It is worthy of remark, that the bishop and presbyters do not pretend to *give the Holy Ghost* by the imposition of their hands, although they desire or pray that the candidate may “receive” that gift. Our formulary does not say or imply that the Holy Ghost is thus given, but that *the office and work of a priest* is thus committed to the person ordained. To give the Holy Ghost is one thing; to commit an office and work to any one is another.

have vested in every church to remodel and adapt itself according to time and circumstance, in subordination to the fundamental principles of edification, order, and love ; and *necessity*, in the manifest abuses to which the system of election led, and which it would undoubtedly foster again, if it were revived. When the world came into the church, the church was obliged, to a certain extent, to adopt the maxims of the world ; obliged, at all events, in her internal economy, and with a view to keep the spirit of the world in check, to employ those precautions, and to enact those laws, which had already been found wise or necessary in the administration of the commonwealth. And, just as republican or democratic institutions became a burden to the world, so ecclesiastical elections became noxious to the church. Scenes the most scandalous were enacted, outrages the most grievous were committed, in connexion with these church appointments, while the apostolic and primitive practice was retained. And, in the present state of things, there is no practice the revival of which we would more earnestly deprecate than the popular election of parish priests, or of diocesan bishops, or of any order of church ministers whatever.

Such, then, was the Jewish synagogue in the time of our Lord and his Apostles. Its services were altogether distinct from the rites and ceremonies of the temple. Those services consisted in

public prayer and praise, and the reading and preaching of God's word; and they were conducted, completely on every sabbath, and partially two days in every week besides. The conduct of the services, and the administration of government and discipline, were committed to certain presbyters or elders, with a president at their head; all of whom were regularly ordained to their office by the imposition of other presbyters' hands, after their election by the people. This worship, government, and discipline, became, under the Apostles, the model, pattern, or platform of the worship, government, and discipline of the Christian church. And it exists, among protestant churches, to the present day; simply with those variations or adaptations to time and circumstance, which every particular church has a right to adopt and to maintain, so long as it does all things, according to its ability, to edification, in order, and with charity.

It is a matter of thankfulness that the Jewish synagogues, which were greatly multiplied, if not, as some suppose, first instituted, after the return from Babylon, became very instrumental in the propagation of religious knowledge, and in the maintenance of purity of worship, at least as distinct from idolatry, over the whole land. Alas! the teaching of the elders became sadly distorted by tradition; and dead forms of prayer and praise were too often substituted for spiritual desires and

thanksgivings. But still Moses and the prophets were read. And still the form of worship was such as might well be animated by the heartfelt breathings of a devout and faithful soul ; and who shall say how many thousands, through divine grace, worshipped the God of their fathers in spirit and in truth within the walls of the ancient synagogue ? Who among us, if he had lived in those days, and had loved the nation of the Jews, would not gladly have contributed to the building of many a synagogue, in which Jesus himself, and his Apostles, might one day preach ?

II. *He loveth our nation*, said the Jewish presbyters. Brethren, how many or how few are they, whether presbyters or people, who possess a true and enlightened love for our own reformed and scriptural Church of England,—our own time-honoured Zion,—our own undoubted branch of the Apostolic and Catholic church ? Love to the church at large, or sympathy and charity towards all who believe in Christ, is most certainly an invariable feature in true Christian character. And the time was, when to speak of anything more definite and limited, or to call for any affection more circumscribed and peculiar, would have seemed superfluous, or, at all events, unsuited to a discourse from a Christian pulpit. And so it would be now, if we were about to call for anything like a narrow or sectarian spirit,—any mere party

feeling,—anything like denominational intolerance, or the blind bigotry of human passion or human ignorance in any of its forms. But there are reasons—weighty and urgent reasons—why every one among us should not only cherish a large and liberal love to the holy church universal, but why we should examine, why we should purify, why we should cherish, and why we should be prepared to act upon, a special and peculiar love for our own particular branch of that universal church. Every honest, thoughtful, and serious man must have, and ought to have, a love and a preference for his own church, be it what it may; and if he be not convinced that it deserves this love and preference, he ought to belong to it no longer. His attachment may be right or wrong, ignorant or wise; but a real and heartfelt love, involving a choice and preference, he ought to have. And, therefore, even upon general grounds, and still more because of the peculiar dangers and difficulties of the present day, it is no needless task to describe, and to endeavour to excite or increase, *a true and enlightened love for that established church to which we belong.* What are the grounds of this attachment? What is its nature? What are its limits? What its legitimate results?

He who loves our church aright, loves her chiefly *as a witness of the truth of God in Christ*; on account of her general purity of doctrine,* and

* If there are a few expressions in some parts of our services

the simple, scriptural, spiritual nature of her worship ; in other words, on account of the Gospel of Christ which she holds forth, and the assistance which she offers in approaching the Father, faithfully and devoutly, through the great Mediator. We love our church because of her declarations of gospel truth ; because of her protests against error, and especially against those peculiar forms of error which are the foundations of the throne of Antichrist ; because of her assertion of the principle that Holy Scripture alone is the rule of our Christian faith ; because of her large use of Scripture in her public services ; because of the beauty, simplicity, and devotion of her forms of prayer ; because of the adaptation of her services to all ages and conditions of life, from the cradle to the grave ; because, in her spirit and her forms, she exalts the Saviour, proclaims the most wholesome doctrine*

which may be so interpreted as to countenance false doctrine, let them be removed by competent authority ; and if any real blemishes remain in our Book of Common Prayer, let them, by all means, be done away. But, *take the Prayer-Book as it is*, and still I am at a loss to find a church *more pure* than our own, or whose faults and defects do not *more than counter-balance* our imperfections.

* *Article xi. Of the Justification of Man.* We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works or deservings ; wherefore, that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the homily of Justification.

of justification by faith, guides us to the fountain of grace, and keeps us aloof at once from superstition, and from those follies which misguided reason has mingled with religion ; and because she is a bond of unity, a means of holy communion of heart and soul with good men of all ages and kindreds and tongues, with patriarchs and prophets, with apostles and martyrs, with holy and humble believers of every section and every denomination of the Christian church, from the moment of its first foundation even to this day. We love and venerate our church, in one word, because she honours Christ, and protests against Antichrist ; because she is the home of truth and the dwelling-place of charity ; because she has with her no altar of idolatry, but the table of the Lord ; because she vindicates and upholds our Christian liberty, while she does much to deliver us from the slavery of Satan and of sin ; because she becomes to every humble, upright, and godly member of her communion, no less than the house of God, no less than the gate of heaven.

This is the great and primary reason of a true Christian love to the Church of England ; and to this *all other reasons are, and must ever be, subordinate*. And there are other reasons, cogent in themselves, and overwhelming in their force when combined with that sovereign reason which has just been given. We love our church *as a com-*

munity well ordered and rightly constituted, in accordance with the Gospel. We have given, and do give, our hearty consent to her departure from apostolic and primitive practice, so far as she has departed, and to her adherence to that practice, so far as she has retained it. We believe that her Episcopal government is entirely defensible on scriptural grounds ; and, while we know that we should be *more than justified* in throwing it off as an incumbrance and a pest, if it should betray its trusts, minister to superstition, become tyrannical, make or enforce laws in opposition to the laws of Christ, or step in as a barrier between the soul and the Saviour who has died to redeem it,—we do, at the same time, feel ourselves *bound and willing* to render all honour and all dutiful obedience to our ecclesiastical governors, so long as they rule in accordance with the will of God, and agreeably to the existing constitution and the primary design and intentions of our church. We can cheerfully uphold and adhere to our system of orders, so long as it shall be preserved free from the taint of superstition ; and we can with a good conscience maintain and advocate our system of endowments and of local or territorial ministrations, and even such trifling things as our gradations of ecclesiastical rank, so long as all these things shall be found to contribute, on the whole, to the propagation and defence of gospel truth, the preservation of pure worship,

the honour of the cross of Christ, the welfare of men's souls, the well-being of civil society, and, in all things, the glory of God.

Again, we love our church, at least many of us do, *as the church of our forefathers*. I know that I have now descended to a lower ground than that which I have hitherto occupied. But, in connexion with weightier matters, and in due subordination to more substantial reasons, who shall say that it is a matter of no consequence to the head or to the heart that we belong to the church of our ancestors? If the claims of two Protestant churches should appear to be otherwise evenly balanced, who would not feel his choice instantly decided, if one of the two were moreover the church in which he had been brought up? As long as the heart of man is capable of filial reverence and love, and as long as the fifth commandment continues to form part of the moral law of God, so long does this reason for attachment to a scriptural church retain its weight. I love the church in which, as an unconscious infant, I was myself dedicated to God,—I love the church whose instructions and admonitions have sounded in a parent's ear, and whose prayers and praises have been uttered by a parent's lips,—whose services, with their unwearied round, marked out continually the revolving years of a parent's life, and whose walls and pinnacles now fling their shadow over my father's grave! How can we do otherwise than be faithful to our church, so long as

she is faithful to her God? How can we forbear to love her, so long as she continues to be what formerly she was? How can we but say, with the Psalmist of old, “If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth?” Not that there is anything in natural affection to justify an adherence to our church if she should become corrupt, or should fall from simplicity and truth. Far from it! They who are with God, if they should be made to know of abominations in their once holy place, would desire that you should entirely escape them! They can have no sympathy with any earthly sanctuary that is polluted by superstition, or marred by unbelief. Their voice is united with the voice of God, concerning every apostate church, “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues!” (Rev. xviii. 4.)

And, yet once more, we may reasonably love and venerate our church as having become *a channel of heavenly grace and blessing to ourselves*. We love her if her prayers and her praises have been chariots of fire in which our own souls have risen to the throne of God; we love her if our hearts have been warmed, or have been made solemn or glad, while she has sounded in our ears the words of eternal life; we love her if we have felt comfort and a benediction from on high while we have taken part in her sacred ordinances,—if we have

beheld the Saviour with an eye of faith while she has broken the bread and poured out the wine in commemoration of his death,—if we have meekly and thankfully submitted to her guidance while she has conducted us, in thought, by her yearly services, through the course of our Saviour's earthly history, from Bethlehem to Calvary, and then from the open grave of the risen Redeemer to the opened heavens, and the pouring forth of gifts from the hands of our ascended and ever-living Intercessor. Surely it is not too much to say that Christians do, and well may, love their church, in proportion to the amount of heavenly light and grace which they have received through her varied ministrations.

Such are some solid grounds upon which love to the Church of England may safely rest. But what is that love itself, if true, and enlightened, and such as it ought to be? What is its nature? what are its limitations? what its consequences and results?

It is *not a blind and idolatrous attachment*. It is not such an esteem, or such a veneration, as may lead us to put the church in the place of Christ, or to regard it as destined to perform for us those offices which can be performed by none but the Saviour himself. It is not an attachment which cherishes or tolerates anything like a hope that we shall be saved, or that we shall receive any blessing, simply by reason of the sect unto which we thus belong.

No church can interpose as a mediator between us and God. No holiness of those who minister in the church can transfer itself to us. No grace is conveyed to us, even officially, by the hands of mortal men; it can come to us only by means of the word of God, and in answer to faithful prayer. The church offers no sacrifice for sin; the church sanctifies no human soul; it is only an institution subordinate to Christ and to the Spirit,—a pipe that is empty of itself, and conveys no good to our souls, except so far as we receive, through its instrumentality, the truth and the grace of God. Therefore we must take heed lest we give any undue honour to the church which we venerate and love. We must watch against that sinful tendency of a fallen nature which is prone to make an idol of almost everything that it has been led to regard as good.

Again, love to our church must be *consistent with charity to all men*. We dare not set up any arrogant pretensions; we must not presume to despise or disown churches which differ from ourselves. As an Episcopal church, we shall merit the displeasure of Almighty God if we revile the orders or government of the churches of a Presbyterian or Independent constitution. As a Protestant church, we have no right to do more than avoid and denounce the errors, while we pray for the conversion, of the Papacy. Its claims we must reject, and we must stand in an attitude of self-defence against its

power and its arts, because it is, in principle, intolerant and aggressive, and seeks to deprive ourselves and all other churches of our Christian liberty. Its superstitions and its false doctrines we must refuse to adopt, thanking God that our eyes have been opened to detect them. But, for the Romanist, as well as for all who are in error, we ought to pray. Why has no special prayer for the fallen Church of Rome found place, of late years, in our liturgy? We had once a prayer, in the Litany, for deliverance "from the tyranny of the Bishop of Rome and all his detestable enormities." But why has not our church possessed, and why do we not continually offer, on this head, some special prayer of real, heartfelt charity? Perhaps, for this lack of charity, God has now put into the hands of that church a scourge beneath which we are beginning to suffer! I, for one, do deeply feel that as long as our Articles rightly declare that the Church of Rome has fallen, so long our liturgy ought to pray for her recovery and restoration. And certain I am that we can hope for no blessing in our church, except in proportion as we cultivate a spirit of pitying love towards churches that have erred, and of cordial brotherly good will towards those which are still sound in the faith of our common Lord.

Lastly, *we cannot venture to declare that our attachment to our church is, and must be, unalterable to the end of our days.* From its very nature, our love

to the Church of England can continue unchanged only so long as that church herself retains the characteristics for which we esteem and venerate her. Let her be unfaithful to the truth, and we will not deplore her overthrow! Let her depart from simplicity of worship,—let her set up false and unscriptural claims,—and, if we love her now as we ought to love her, we shall then renounce her communion, and seek for a holier and happier home. In that case, let her fall, if it be God's will, and we will not weep; let her triumph, and we will not yield to her! But, in the mean time, let each of us do what in him lies to hinder such fearful apostasy, to avert such a fatal and terrible catastrophe. Danger is threatening us;—there are Traitors within our citadel, and there is an active and watchful Enemy without;—but let us continue in prayer to God for his mighty protection; let us deprecate his righteous displeasure on account of our multiplied offences; let us seek grace whereby we may serve Him acceptably with reverence and godly fear in our several vocations within the borders of his church; and let us hope that our prayers will be heard, and that “the wild boar out of the wood” will not be permitted to root up the spiritual vineyard which God has so extensively planted in our land. Let us trust also that, if need be, our Sovereign in council will take such measures as shall remove all occasions of offence, and wrest out of the hands of our deadly

enemies the weapons which they have begun to wield against us. Above all, let us see that our love to our church be duly attended, in our temper and in our daily lives, by a manifestation of love to God and man. Let us adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. Let us conduct ourselves with kindness and, if occasion require, with candour and patience, to those who are within the borders of our Zion ; and let us act circumspectly, with christian charity, towards those who are without. And while we rejoice in the prosperity of all other churches which walk in truth, and are willing to concede to us that liberty which they claim for themselves, let us studiously endeavour, in an especial manner, to promote the spiritual welfare, to advance the efficiency, and to extend the borders, of our own.

III. He loveth our nation, said the elders in our text, *and he hath built us a synagogue*. Who can forbear to observe that in the present day, above all that have gone before it, we are called on to display our attachment to our spiritual Zion by multiplying her places of worship ? Population is increasing, and popery is building ; and if our love is waxing cold, and those who have been baptized into our church are left to perish for lack of knowledge, what must be the consequence, and whose will be the guilt ? If our forefathers have handed down to us churches and endowments, from which

we continue to derive benefit in the present day, how can we overlook the duty which lies upon us to arise and build for those who are even now destitute of the privileges which we enjoy, and for the generations yet to come ?

The only question which can properly arise in connexion with this subject is that which relates to *the best mode* of contributing to the great work of church extension. Nor can I deny that this is a weighty and serious question for persons who are able and disposed to render that assistance which is so much needed.

Two principal methods, in the present day, present themselves to our notice.—In the first place, a most admirable Society for the purposes of Church Extension has lately been formed, with the design of erecting churches to be placed at the disposal of Trustees, who will present them, from time to time, to pious men, *protestants at heart as well as by profession*, and such as may be expected to preach in those churches the truth as it is in Jesus, so long as our national establishment shall be able to make any head against popish and unscriptural error. I do not hesitate to say that, as an individual, I shall give my most hearty support to this excellent society, as soon and as far as I may be able. And in the mean time I should be happy to receive and transmit any subscriptions or donations from persons more able than myself to render it pecuniary aid.—The other plan of church building to which

I have alluded is that for which a collection is to be made this morning, in obedience to a letter from our bishop. By this plan we are invited to furnish means for the erection of churches, to be provided with ministers by the nomination of the diocesan for the time being. It has been proposed to raise a sum sufficient for the immediate erection of ten churches in this diocese; one of them in Cheltenham, and others in populous localities, some of which I have reason to regard with peculiar interest. Zealous and faithful clergymen, quite free from Tractarian error, have already been nominated to some of these charges. Let us hope and pray that our bishop may be rightly influenced and guided from above with respect to every appointment which he may make in these dangerous and difficult times. And, if we approve of the plan which is thus submitted to us, let us do what we can in contributing to its support.

LONDON :

PRINTED BY G. J. PALMER, SAVOY-STREET, STRAND.

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